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THE JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY

MIND DISCERNED

“ **W**e have said that those objects which can not be incorporated into the one space which the understanding envisages are relegated to another sphere called imagination. We reach here a most important corollary. As material objects, making a single system which fills space and evolves in time, are conceived by abstraction from the flux of sensuous experience, so, *pari passu*, the rest of experience, with all its other outgrowths and concretions, falls out with the physical world and forms the sphere of mind, the sphere of memory, fancy, and the passions. We have in this discrimination the *genesis of mind*, not of course in the transcendental sense in which the word mind is extended to mean the sum total and mere fact of existence—for mind, so taken, can have no origin and indeed no specific meaning—but the genesis of mind as a determinate form of being, a distinguishable part of the universe known to experience and discourse, the mind that unravels itself in meditation, inhabits animal bodies, and is studied in psychology.”¹

This passage from Santayana’s *Reason in Common Sense* is quoted for homiletical rather than critical purposes. I confess, however, that I have found no little difficulty in attempting to construe it intelligibly and systematically. There is apt to remain with me a residuum which is ambiguous and obscure. For, if the genesis of mind is the consequence of a discrimination which, in its turn, is made by processes of conceiving and abstracting, there seems obviously to be presupposed as already generated or existing a mind which discriminates in that manner. And if such a mind is to be presupposed, it is not easy to make out whether it is mind in the transcendental sense without origin or specific meaning, or whether it is the mind known to experience and studied in psychology. Both seem to be logically excluded. For a mind which discriminates by conceiving and abstracting can hardly mean the sum total and mere fact of existence, and a mind which, as a consequence of such discrimination, becomes a determinate form of being, can hardly be the mind which, by discriminating, leads to that consequence. Yet mind as mere fact of existence and mind as a determinate form of

¹ *The Life of Reason*, by George Santayana, Vol. I, pp. 124–125.

being seem to exhaust the whole domain of mind as defined in the passage and its context.

These considerations I naturally believe are as obvious to Santayana as they are to me, and that belief makes me suspect that the passage was not written to provoke an excursion into dialectic. I suspect that his presentation of a flux of experience coming somehow to be discriminated into material objects—making a single system which fills space and evolves in time—and a sphere of memory, fancy and the passions, is an attempt, not to raise metaphysical problems, but to tell in a fairly accurate way after all, how, in an individual's life, his personality and the world he lives in come to be sharply set over against each other. Such, at any rate, was my understanding on first reading the passage. Later readings brought out and emphasized the difficulties to which I have given expression. They have led me to do something more, to consider afresh the question of mind in the transcendental sense and the mind which is studied in psychology. And it is because they have done this, that I now approach the question with this introduction.

It is to be emphasized that what now follows is neither criticism nor exposition of the quoted passage, although its words may frequently recur. I can not easily escape their haunting suggestiveness and have no desire to. The mind which inhabits animal bodies and mind in that sense in which the word is extended to mean the sum total and mere fact of existence, set forth a contrast which is not easily escapable when one remembers the writings of philosophers. Moreover, reflection quickly leads to the recognition that no matter how absolute the varied determinations of being may be taken to be, determinate forms of being are discovered in the course of one's personal history. The universe which we investigate is, in a very genuine sense, a universe of discourse—certainly, a universe discoursed about—a sort of total object of thought, the totality of which seems to be in no wise impaired by any of the distinctions discovered or set up within it. The mind which is studied in psychology as a determinate form of being exists in this universe of inquiry alongside other determinate forms of being from which it is distinguished. Both it and they are in some sense objects of thought and their being so does not in any way seem to exclude either them or the distinction between them from the total universe of inquiry. In other words, the world of material objects and the mind which inhabits animal bodies lie, as it were, discriminated in a single universe of discourse and may be subjects of thoughtful inquiry even if such inquiry may seem never to occur except with the presence of some animal body with a mind inhabiting it.

Shall we say then that the total universe of discourse to which all distinctions and discriminations are relevant is mind in the transcendental sense, the sum total and mere fact of existence ? An affirmative answer could identify itself with several recognized systems of philosophy. But it is not any such identification which is here sought, but rather what understanding, if any, is to be given to such an affirmation.

Let us consider the total universe of discourse, that realm in which all determinate forms of being lie, so to speak, side by side in their manifold relations. We may give to this universe other names, such as the world of phenomena or the sum total of experience. Naming it is, however, apt to disclose some prejudice about it or some theoretical construction of it, of which it itself may be innocent. If it is named a world of phenomena, the term "phenomena" may imply no more than that it appears as just what it appears to be; but the term may also imply that its items are phenomena or appearances of something else and thus involve a relation not possibly given within the universe we are considering. For clearly the total realm of being does not contain within itself a relation to something not contained within it, and a relation to something wholly exterior to it would not be a relation open to investigation. Propositions involving such a relation would be meaningless. Again, if the universe we are considering is named the sum total of experience, the term "experience" may mean only that we are considering it, talking about it, regarding it in any way we can regard it, or making trial of its many factors ; but the term may also mean that the universe of discourse is the result of some anterior process by which it is generated and comes to be the kind of universe it is. In this latter sense "experience" is not an item within its boundaries, and can not be explored. The expression "the total universe of discourse" may involve similar difficulties. It has, however, the advantage of suggesting primarily logical considerations. It brings at once to the front the fact that what we are concerned with are those realms of being which are objects of study and inquiry, the universe of the chemist and the physicist as well as the universe of the moralist and the psychologist. It emphasizes subject-matter as over against speculation and hypotheses. It calls before us the natural attitude of the man who finds a purse and looks to see what is in it. So men find rocks and trees, seas and stars, memories and fancies, and look to see what these things are and what can be said about them. All inquiry starts in this way and not with "phenomena" or "experience" or "sense-data." These may be arrived at later as in-

terpretations or explanations of what it was with which inquiry started, but they are not original with its inception. It is, therefore, in the hope of keeping close to the initial act of inquiry into definite, concrete subject-matter that I speak of the total universe of discourse, using the term "total" to mean no more than the attempt to leave out no instance whatever of such inquiry.

This universe in its totality—meaning by totality what I have just defined—might conceivably be the object of a single individual's consideration. We have a sense of that whenever we enter a library which contains measurably all that men have ever said or discovered about this universe. With time and patience enough one might read every book and learn what purses had been found and what treasures within them. But it is not the magnitude of the information possibly to be derived in this way that is in point here, but rather the fact that such a reader, were he asked to note it, would observe an underlying continuity in his readings. He would observe for instance that the physicist and the psychologist were both studying sounds even if the former said they were waves of air and the latter, sensations; that the moralist and the economist were both investigating goods even if the former called them objects of desire and the latter commodities of exchange. In sum, he would observe that in all his reading he was confronted with a world to be interpreted and with interpretations of that world. The latter might vary from Genesis to Einstein, but the former would seem to be invariable. Such a reader might leave the library with what I conceive to be a very simple, but also a very fundamental piece of metaphysical wisdom, namely that in spite of the varieties of interpretation, there is, logically speaking, but one subject-matter to be interpreted. The physicist and the psychologist have the same subject-matter although they interpret it differently, likewise the moralist and the economist, likewise everybody. That is, all inquiry is ultimately relevant to the same subject-matter, the same universe of discourse. It is the continuity of this subject-matter, underlying all interpretations of it, which makes it possible for the reader to detect what he is reading about.

To strip this universe of every shred of interpretation is not easy. For, in the first place, some interpretation has apparently laid hold of it before one is led to the attempt so to strip it. And, in the second place, any stripping is inevitably fraught with the danger of being itself an interpretation of some sort. On this double difficulty one might dwell at length, for the search for what is called "the immediate" has been long, laborious, and unconvincing. Yet, as I take it, the search is ill-advised. We are not

called upon in our investigations to divorce subject-matter and interpretation in any way which would force upon us two wholly disconnected universes. That puzzling obligation does not as a matter of fact confront us. We might with greater truth assert that any attempted divorce would be meaningless, since interpretation involves itself the identification of the subject-matter to be interpreted. This assertion seems to be valid when followed out in detail. For what are sounds? The physicist and the psychologist both answer the question and it is quite clear that they are both telling us what sounds are. There is no difference of subject-matter between them. There is something to which their replies, however different, are relevant and that something is identified by them and their hearers. If some lover of the pure immediate should interpose with the claim that to call that something "sound" is already to interpret it, we should have no difficulty in recognizing that he was talking about the same item in the universe of discourse about which the others were also talking. In short, subject-matter needs no divorce, either absolute or relative, from interpretation in order to be identified. If it did, it is quite clear that the visitor to the library could not understand a single book he read, or discover any differences of interpretation or opinion among the authors.

Consequently it would appear that we can tell what subject-matter is either by identifying it or interpreting it. Asked what sounds are, we either produce them or refer to physics and psychology. This fact recalls many familiar contrasts of philosophy, such as knowledge of acquaintance and knowledge about, fact and meaning, existence and explanation, object and idea. That such contrasts should so naturally and constantly recur is good evidence that they are metaphysically sound. They indicate that the universe of discourse, that is, again, the universe within which all inquiry occurs and proceeds, is characterized fundamentally by the contrast of subject-matter and interpretation, or, we may say, of object and idea.² Although we may be enticed by various considerations to attempt to divorce the terms of this contrast so that they may constitute initially two distinct realms of being which are subsequently united by some secret agency, we never really succeed. Man has contrived their union only through hypotheses which are ultimately either unintelligible or *petiones principii*. We might better side with those who say, "What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." For no inquiry into the universe of discourse has ever succeeded in separating it into a universe of objects apart from

² This I take to be Spinoza's doctrine of the attributes of extension and thought, and the basis of his axiom, "A true idea agrees with its object."

ideas and a universe of these ideas absolutely apart from objects. In the words of Spinoza : *Ordo et connectio idearum idem est ac ordo et connectio rerum.*

Since the universe of discourse is a universe of this kind, we might give to it with some appropriateness the name of mind. Such a name would be used in the transcendental sense, for it would be used to indicate possibilities, the possibility of knowledge, of inquiry, of discursive thinking. It could not mean that a mind was taking thought of a world. In this latter sense the name could have no specific meaning. Neither could such a mind be said to have an origin. One might reluctantly admit that the universe of discourse itself might have an origin, that it was not self-sustained and self-sufficient, but mind in the transcendental sense could have no origin within it, since mind in that sense is but a name given to the universe's salient character. And that name would indicate the sum total and mere fact of existence as constituting the universe wherein inquiry is active and productive.

Clearly this mind is also not a determinate form of being, a distinguishable part of the universe known to experience and discourse. It does not inhabit animal bodies and it is not studied in psychology. Nor does it explain the universe it constitutes, for it is not a substance which supports that universe, nor a cause of which that universe is an effect. It is a name for the fact that object and idea are already married whenever their union is open to consideration. It is a protest against the divorce courts of epistemology. It may be more, indicating a type of structure which the metaphysician must recognize in any dealing with being in its ultimate character.³

What then is the mind studied in psychology ? Clearly it is not mind in the sense we have been considering. No argument is needed, I imagine, to support this statement, for the mind studied in psychology is a mind which remembers, imagines, perceives, reasons, is disturbed by passions, moved by desires, and, above all else, inhabits animal bodies. It is a biographical and not a transcendental fact. It is a determinate form of being. It has a genesis and an origin. It is studied in psychology and to that study it must largely be left here. Since, however, the passage from Santayana which led us to it is a summary of its genesis, we may consider that topic in the light of our previous discussion. I am fairly content to let Santayana's account of its genesis stand, for, as already indicated, that account calls us to note how the sphere of memory, fancy and the passions falls out with the physical world, and forms

³ I have suggested this in an article on "Structure." See this JOURNAL, Vol. XIV, No. 25, pp. 680-88.

a sphere by itself although still in touch with what it has left. Every individual can, I imagine, discover some such genesis in his own life if he studiously looks for it. And assuredly the things which for an individual do not make up the physical world are the things which are studied in psychology. Santayana's account may, therefore, stand. What is said in the following is neither exposition nor criticism, but only considerations which are in line with the previous discussion and which are prompted by the statement that there is a genesis of mind in the psychological sense. But strictly it is not with its genesis specifically that I shall be concerned, but with something relevant to its genesis, namely the possibility of it, as a determinate form of being, interpreting the universe in which it finds itself.

The mind studied in psychology inhabits animal bodies. Whether it inhabits all such bodies is uncertain, but the question whether it does is one of the best proofs of its habitat and a clear indication that its definition is ultimately biological. It is distinguished in the body not in the way the head, brain, or any anatomical part of the body is distinguished, but in the way the life of the body is distinguished. It is not a part of the body in the sense that the fingernails are a part of it. If we call it a part at all, we tend to follow Aristotle and say that body and mind are parts of the living individual, and are more like an axe and cutting than they are like an axe-head and an axe-handle. Disembodied spirits seem unable to function without a medium, and souls, if they survive one body, seem forced to seek another. So that even if we say that the mind is not a part of the body in the anatomical sense, and even if we fancy that the mind can be without a body, it must have a habitat to be effective, to be communicated with, and to be studied.

Now the animal bodies which mind as a determinate form of being inhabits are items in the universe of discourse. They themselves belong to the total domain of things which can be investigated and are objects of inquiry like all other objects in the same domain. Asking what they are, we say, among other things that might be said, that they are the habitations of mind, and that being such they think and reason. They interpret the world in which they live. They say, among other things, that sounds are waves of air and also that they are sensations; that goods are objects of desire and commodities of exchange. I am not concerned here with their justification in saying these things, but with the fact that they do say them and with the possibility of saying them that lies back of that fact. Of our interpretations of subject-matter we say that some are sound, others unsound, some correct, others incorrect, some

true, others false. But it is quite clear that back of such affirmations and fundamental to them is the possibility of making any affirmations at all. On what does that possibility depend? In other words, how are we to construe the fact that animal bodies, in so far as they respond to the world about them by interpreting it, are said to be inhabited by a mind?

This question of possibility ought not to be so handled that in place of possibility we have impossibility. Yet this, I suspect, is what is too frequently done when the question is considered. For instance, the possibility of interpreting sounds as waves of air can not lie in the initial existence of waves of air as subject-matter to be interpreted. Yet our books are full of attempts to exhibit the possibility of interpretation generally in terms of some specific interpretation which itself rests on that possibility. Nor can we successfully flee from the universe of discourse altogether and say that the possibility is outside of it or arises from the union of factors in themselves alien to it. Yet this too has been repeatedly tried, with only ultimate confusion as a consequence. Indeed just now I can think of only two answers which promise anything like conclusiveness. The first is that the possibility resides in the fact that mind as a determinate form of being inhabits animal bodies; and the second is that it resides in the fact of the universe of discourse itself defined as mind in the transcendental sense as we have defined it above.

Yet I must regard the first answer with suspicion. Its sole title to accuracy, so far as I can discover, resides in the fact that the universe of discourse is considered and inquired into only, so far as we know, by animal bodies inhabited by a mind. Because it is bodies of this sort that do the interpreting and write the books in the library, and because without them interpretations are apparently not made, nor books written, it is natural to conclude that the possibility resides in them. But this turns out to be a rather queer conclusion when once it is attentively examined. For my own animal body is one of the many objects of my study, and while I may discover that it is different from other objects in many ways, I do not discover that *as an object of study* it differs at all from them. It lies side by side with them in the total universe of discourse. It is, to be sure, what Bergson calls a privileged object since its movements and activities enlarge the range of my inquiries, but this fact is one of the discovered differences between it and other objects and does not put it in a different universe from them. I know that its health and integrity are prime factors in successful study. As in imagination I rob it successively of what are called its faculties, I find that the universe of discourse is for me progressively im-

poverished, but I do not find that it ever wholly disappears. I know that to the blind this universe is not luminous as it is to me and that to the deaf it is not sonorous, but I know that I myself neither see nor hear without adequate stimuli thereto. In other words such differences as are thus indicated appear to be differences due to the constitution of the universe as a whole and imply no more than the interdependence of its parts. They are not differences which can be intelligibly construed as ultimately disrupting its continuity. The difference between an animal body which can see and one which can not, is like the difference between one which can fly and one which can not. Such facts as these, together with the other that I can not even in fancy abolish the universe and leave anything to consider, make the conclusion look queer to me that the possibility of interpretation resides in the fact that a mind inhabits animal bodies.

In other words, I can make nothing intelligible out of the attempt to start with animal bodies fully equipped in their animality and then by adding a mind to them construe their thoughtful consideration of their world in terms of this addition only. The attempt has been made many times, but it has always been wrecked ultimately by our inability to exhibit what animal bodies are without any implication at all of mind. The attempt moves wholly within the total universe of discourse. It is never free from the distinction between thing and idea. Its enticement, as has already been said, lies wholly in the fact that without animal bodies the attempt itself is not made, but this fact must be offset by the recognition that there are other things, such as digesting food, which are not done without animal bodies, and that we are not wont to construe the possibility of doing them by adding to the body a factor in which the possibility resides. Significant, therefore, as the fact may be that without animal bodies inhabited by a mind inquiry into the universe of discourse does not occur and no interpretation of it is made, the attempt to construe the possibility of such interpretation in terms of the inhabiting mind—the mind studied in psychology—is here rejected. We turn to the other locus of possibility, namely the fact of mind in the transcendental sense.⁴

Those who deal with the natural history of mind in the psychological sense point out how that history keeps pace with the natural history of animal bodies, but they have never been able to discover

⁴ It may be unnecessary to point out again how radically different the transcendental mind is from the psychological. The former can not be defined in terms of conscious processes or behavior. It is neither substance nor cause. I conceive it to be, as indicated in the article "Structure," one of the structural facts of existence generally.

a point at which mind may be said definitely to enter, at which it precisely takes up its habitation. The reason is, perhaps, not that they have not been acute enough to discover it, but rather that there is no such point to discover. A mind inhabiting a body may involve a procedure wholly unlike that of a tenant inhabiting a house. The latter leases his dwelling from an owner who has a prior right to possession. It is difficult, however, to think that a mind leases a body from nature and then moves in on some appointed day. It seems to dwell in its habitation, if we are to keep up the figure, more as the house's outlook dwells in it, something congenital and not alien. It would seem as if animal bodies become seeing, thinking, remembering, imaginative, and passionate bodies in much the same way as they become digesting, breathing, walking, and reproductive bodies. Just how they become this latter sort of bodies we do not very well know, but we do know that in actually being bodies of this sort they do no more than react to a world which is itself congenial to their reactions. They react, that is, to a world which makes the specific character of their reactions possible, but this possibility they do not create. Chemistry may be said to inhabit them and unravel itself in digestion, but the possibility of such a determinate, individualized, and organized form of chemistry clearly resides in the fact that the world in which they are is in a very genuine sense a chemical world. Should all animal bodies cease to be, digestion might also cease, but since the process of digesting did not create the chemistry which made it possible, we could not affirm that what we might call the chemical structure of the world also ceased to be. We might rather venture to say that the possibility of chemistry as a determinate form of being, inhabiting animal bodies, and unravelling itself in digestion resided in the fact that there is chemistry in the transcendental sense.

Our attitude toward the question of the possibility of interpretation, of thinking, of knowledge might advantageously be similar. For thinking, like digestion, is a reaction to a world congenial to it. Just as we do not affirm that by digestion the possibility of chemistry is created, so we ought not to affirm that by thinking the possibility of mind is created. We ought rather to affirm that the possibility of mind as a determinate form of being inhabiting animal bodies resides in the fact that there is mind in the transcendental sense. Such a view makes of the genesis of the mind studied in psychology something wholly natural—I know of no better word—as natural as digestion or breathing. With the death of all animal bodies thinking itself might cease, but that which made thinking possible would not cease. This latter would remain something char-

acteristic of the world in which animal bodies had come to be. That is, mind in the transcendental sense can have no genesis. The term when so used does not indicate an individual existence whose days may be numbered. Like mechanism, chemistry, and what in general we call the laws of nature, it indicates a type of structure or a system of connections, a logical structure it might be called or a system of logical connections. To this structure living beings conform in much the same way as they conform to other structural facts. As by conforming to the mechanical structure of things they maintain their equilibrium, so by conforming to the logical structure of things they think in propositions, they make distinctions and so finally come to discover themselves as distinct from their world, recognize themselves as the habitations of mind, and undertake the study of psychology.

FREDERICK J. E. WOODBRIDGE.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY.

THE UNITY OF CONSCIOUSNESS

FROM the rise of modern philosophy to the present day, great interest has centered around the problem of the unity of consciousness. That consciousness *has* a certain unity, or appearance of unity, no one questions; the problem lies in giving an explanation of that unity which will contradict neither the findings of descriptive psychology nor the requirements of sound logic nor the facts brought to light by experimental investigation.

Several of the chapters of James's *Psychology*¹ seem to many writers to have dealt in an exhaustive way with the descriptive and logical sides of the discussion. There we find a trenchant criticism of the mind-stuff theory, so compelling to many minds as to banish for them into outer darkness any theory of psychic atomism. "As a feeling feels, so it is," if recognized as an axiom, argues mightily against unconscious mental states or the fusion of conscious elements in a present feeling. Two assumptions made by James, however, have somewhat undermined his clearly spun theory. One of these is the assumption that a present feeling is aware of itself; the other, that a present feeling is in some unexplained way "appropriative" of the content of the immediately preceding one. The credit for exposing these weaknesses is due to Professor Strong.² On the one hand, he has shown that consciousness is not interfused with the content of the psychic state, so that to have a feeling is to be conscious of it, but that consciousness is something

¹ Cf. Chaps. VI, IX, X, XIII.

² Charles A. Strong, *The Origin of Consciousness*, London, 1918.